

The Fairfield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134707
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	294671
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Linda Rockey HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Buckley
Headteacher	Alex Wall
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Carnforth Drive Worcester WR4 9HG
Telephone number	01905 457577
Fax number	01905 453047

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school opened under the Fresh Start initiative in September 2004. Its predecessor, Elbury Mount Primary School, was placed in special measures twice over a period of six years; it was closed in August 2004. The Fairfield Community Primary School opened on the same site and moved into purpose-built accommodation in June 2006. It serves an area in north Worcester where the proportion of children eligible for free school meals is more than double the national average. The proportion of children with learning difficulties is also much higher than the national average. Almost all the children are from a White British background. Based on a campus, the school is linked to a neighbourhood nursery and adult and community learning provision. Consequently, the school benefits from a range of support services, including extended day-care facilities.

The neighbourhood nursery is subject to a separate inspection by the child care inspectorate. It was last inspected in March 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school providing a satisfactory standard of education. There have been significant improvements since it opened as a Fresh Start school. Last year, a protracted move into the new building hindered academic progress. Additionally, staffing changes had a major impact on the rate of improvement. Since the last monitoring inspection, the headteacher and his deputy have worked hard to re-focus attention on children's attainment and progress. Together, they have developed a clear process for tracking individual children's performance. Standards remain exceptionally low. The school knows there is still a lot to do to raise standards, especially in reading and writing. Recent teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 show no real improvement on the previous two years. Nevertheless, provisional 2007 Year 6 national test results indicate that standards are rising slowly. Although standards of reading and writing across the school are still an area of great concern, lesson observations and a scrutiny of children's work, as well as the school's own data, indicate that the majority of children are making satisfactory progress overall. Children in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) all make satisfactory progress overall and some make good progress from their low starting points. The school's tracking data reveal that children with learning difficulties also make sound progress. Staff are required to check children's rates of progress each half-term. However, they are not held sufficiently to account for children's performance.

Children's personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Their participation in lively assemblies led by the headteacher and the sense of awe and wonder they experience as they explore the school's environmental area promote good spiritual development. The youngest children in the school are beginning to learn about different cultures but older children are not developing this awareness sufficiently well. Moral and social development is satisfactory overall, although school systems are not helping children to recognise firm boundaries. Most parents are positive about the quality of education their children receive. However, a small minority expressed concern to the inspectors about the way the school handles incidents of poor behaviour. Observed behaviour during the inspection was satisfactory, although school records show that inappropriate behaviour by a significant minority of children is a continuing challenge to the school. Even though children initially respond to different new incentives to promote good attendance, this is not sustained over time and attendance remains unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They are better in some parts of the school than in others. In some lessons, teachers have high expectations of the children and plan work taking account of their interests whilst carefully matching activities to their learning needs. Teachers' lesson planning has improved so that most lessons have a clear focus. Nonetheless, more needs to be done to ensure that children of different abilities are appropriately challenged. Teachers are beginning to make learning more relevant to children. So, for example, they write about their visit to Weston-super-Mare or compose persuasive letters to the headteacher about the school garden. There is plenty of scope to develop this aspect of teaching and to raise expectations of what children can achieve, especially the more able.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and accelerate children's rate of progress, especially in reading and writing.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by ensuring expectations are high enough and work is relevant and carefully matched to children's learning needs.

- Develop and implement a whole-school behaviour policy to provide clear guidance about expected behaviour.
- Improve leadership and management through a more rigorous system of accountability. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Analysis of the school data clearly shows that the gap between how the children are doing and what they are capable of is beginning to close. When they start in the Nursery, the children's knowledge and skills are well below the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning. This is especially true in their personal, social and emotional development and communication skills. Children make good progress in these two areas because stimulating activities are carefully planned to develop their independence and their social and language skills. Standards and progress are still not what they should be at the end of Year 2 because of past inadequacies in provision. The 2007 provisional Year 2 results are particularly disappointing. By the end of Year 6, there is an improving picture. Despite low standards, particularly in English, children reached their ambitious targets in the 2007 provisional national assessments in mathematics, and exceeded them in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Their attitudes to learning are continuing to improve, although they can be easily distracted in lessons and do not adapt easily to change. Children are not quick to show enthusiasm but they love the work they do in the school grounds and other active learning experiences such as art and science. Children know about healthy lifestyles. One of the youngest children in the school thinks that 'fruit makes you good' and the oldest children know about balanced diets. They play energetically in the playground and benefit from the physical 'Activate' programme at the beginning of school sessions. Children say they trust adults in the school to sort out their anxieties and they feel their views are taken into account. Preparation for their next school is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are examples of good teaching but this is not consistent across the school. In some classes, there is a lively pace, a clear understanding of what is expected and real enjoyment in active learning. This active learning is beginning to emerge but is far from consistent. During the inspection, children were seen in the outdoor areas enthusiastically investigating camouflage, mini-beasts and pond life. When teachers provide practical, stimulating experiences, such as when children pretended to be Mr Gumpy falling in the river before writing their own stories, children's enjoyment of learning is most evident. Where teaching is satisfactory but less effective, tasks are not always matched to children's learning needs and expectations are not as high. Relationships between adults and children are good but classroom management does not always give children clear guidance about expected behaviour. Some teachers successfully encourage

lively dialogue with children as they try to involve them more in their own learning and show them how to succeed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and has significant strengths. Notable amongst these is the very good match of appropriate activities for children in Year 1 to help them progress towards more formal learning. The regular use of the school grounds enriches children's learning. Efforts to make learning more practical and to use different parts of the curriculum as a stimulus for children's writing are beginning to have a positive impact. The provision for English, mathematics and information and communication technology is satisfactory overall. Personal, social and health education is also satisfactory, although this is boosted by the residential visit to West Malvern by all children in Years 3 to 6, which is a highlight of the year. Information about children's achievements has been used effectively to improve the provision for children with learning difficulties. There is a good range of after-school activities for children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Systems to ensure the safeguarding of children are in place and regularly updated. There are many examples of the headteacher building relationships with families and working closely with them to provide care and guidance for vulnerable children. Teachers and support staff know the children well and are concerned for their welfare. They are very aware of particular children who present challenging behaviour and keep a very close eye on them. However the current behaviour policy does not provide a cohesive whole-school system of rewards and sanctions. The result is a lack of consistency in behaviour management and a distribution of rewards that is sometimes perceived as being unfair. There is a developing system for using targets to motivate children and help them achieve well. All children are aware of the school focus for improving the quality of writing. However, children's specific knowledge of what they have to do themselves to improve varies from class to class. This inconsistency in the effective use of targets also applies to teachers' marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is accurate in his self-evaluation of the school. He has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Lesson observations are followed up with specific feedback on identified areas for development and subsequent improvements monitored. Having identified weaknesses in teaching, additional experienced teachers have been employed to provide extra support and one-to-one coaching. This has resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching. That said, there is not enough good teaching to ensure the faster rate of progress needed. Recently devised action plans for English and mathematics provide a clear focus on improvement issues, although they lack precise and measurable milestones by which to evaluate developments. Governors are committed and keen to be involved in the life of the school. They are developing their role as critical friends but as yet are not holding the school sufficiently to account. Several of them recently attended training to prepare them for visits to classrooms. The vice chair of governors and the governor responsible for learning difficulties and disabilities have both visited the school this term and

prepared informative summary reports for the full governing body. Governors have plans to publish a school profile and are developing a sex and relationships education programme for the autumn term 2007.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

5 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of The Fairfield Community Primary, Worcester, WR4 9HG

As you know, inspectors have been visiting your school regularly to check how well things are going. I am pleased to tell you that the school is much better than it was. We judged it to be a satisfactory and improving school. Mr Muton and I enjoyed talking to you and hearing about all the interesting things that happen in your school. Thank you for all your help.

- These are the things we liked about The Fairfield Community Primary School.
- We were pleased to see how well the youngest children are learning.
- You told us how much you enjoy learning in the environmental garden.
- Mr Muton was impressed with your lively singing in the whole-school assembly.
- We were very glad to hear that you feel safe in school and that adults will listen to you if you are worried about anything.
- Teachers and support staff are working hard to make learning interesting for you.
- It is good to know you understand the importance of exercise and we enjoyed joining in your 'Activate' sessions.

- We have asked the school leaders to improve four things.
- To help you all make faster progress and reach higher standards, especially in reading and writing.
- To improve teaching and learning. You need to make better progress and the best way is to make sure you are taught well at all times.
- To make sure you know how to behave in school. We think there needs to be a system for rewarding good behaviour as well as dealing fairly with bad behaviour.
- To keep a close check on how well you are doing and make sure you all achieve your best.

You can all help to improve your school. Keep working hard on your reading and writing. By the way, I hope those chickens have laid some eggs by now!

With very best wishes for the future,

Linda Rockey HMI